

LEIGHTON BUZZARD
Urban District Council.



ANNUAL REPORT
OF THE
MEDICAL OFFICER OF HEALTH,
FOR THE YEAR 1914,
BY
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TO THE
LEIGHTON BUZZARD
URBAN DISTRICT COUNCIL.

Gentlemen,

I have pleasure in presenting my Annual Report upon the state of the Public Health and Sanitary Condition of Leighton Buzzard for the year 1914.

I estimate the population to be the same as that of last year, viz.: 6850, and on this the birth and death rates are based. The census population in 1911 was 6784.

BIRTHS AND BIRTH-RATE.

129 births were registered, the rate being 18·8 per thousand of the population. With the exception of last year, it is the lowest on record, and about 3 per thousand below the average. 8 births were illegitimate.

The birth-rate for the county of Bedford in 1913 was 20·5. The County Medical Officer in his recently-published Annual Report for that year remarks that the lowest rates were in the Leighton Buzzard and Bedford Urban Districts (16·3 and 16·9). For the whole country in 1914 the birth-rate was 23·6.

DEATHS AND DEATH-RATE.

The number of deaths registered in Leighton Buzzard was 108, of which 13 were non-residents. 17 persons belonging to the district died elsewhere. The death-rate for the year is 16·3, and is 1·7 per 1000 higher than that of any of the last five years. 53 of these deaths were persons over 65 years of age. Last year the number was 33, so that the high rate this year is entirely accounted for by the increased number of deaths amongst old people.

Six children died under one year of age, equivalent to an infantile mortality, or rate per 1000 births, of 46. Although the death-rate is the highest, the infant mortality is much the lowest

of any of the last five years. Three of these deaths were ascribed to debility or prematurity, and two were illegitimate children.

As the County Medical Officer remarks in his annual report, "the ordinary death-rate cannot be taken as a true index of the healthiness of a district, nor can it be justly compared with the rates of other sanitary areas, unless some allowance is made for the relative proportions of males and females at different ages in the districts compared."

The death-rate for England and Wales in 1914 was 13·9, and the infantile mortality 105.

CANCER.

Twelve deaths were registered from Cancer, seven being persons over 65 years of age. The death returns for the whole country shew a gradual increase in the mortality from malignant disease.

In the annual report for the country the following remarks appear in connection with this disease :

"Certain predisposing factors in the causation of cancer are now pretty generally accepted, such as occupation and habits of life (determining a localised chronic irritation or inflammation), the prolonged irritation caused by broken, jagged teeth, etc., and suspicious growths in connections with old scars and simple tumours, and call for a more general recognition among the general public in order that preventive measures and early treatment may be put in operation. To this end the public should be cautioned against losing valuable time by resorting to quack remedies."

As at present the only known cure for cancer is early and complete removal, the great importance of its recognition at the earliest moment is apparent.

The old fashioned practice of waiting to see what happened to a tumour or sore before seeking medical advice was generally the worst possible for the patient; for cancer in its early and curable stage gives rise to no pain or symptoms of ill-health.

INFECTIOUS DISEASES.

32 notifications were received during the year, 14 being cases of Diphtheria, 2 Erysipelas, 9 Scarlet Fever, 1 Typhoid, 2 Puerperal, 1 Poliomyelitis, and 3 Pulmonary Tuberculosis. From the principal zymotic diseases, 6 deaths occurred, viz.: 3 from Diphtheria, 1 Whooping Cough, and 2 Diarrhœa.

DIPHTHERIA.

The first case notified was at the end of September, the girl having come from London the evening before the sore throat developed. No doubt the ailment was contracted either in London or on the journey. The next notification was on October 17th, in a child attending St. Andrew's School. During the following eight weeks 12 cases were reported, 8 being children from the same school, and 3 others from houses occupied by them.

Of the nine cases from this school, six were in standard 5 and one each in standards 3, 4, and 6.

No doubt many slight and unrecognised cases also occurred. The following illustrates how these may be overlooked. A girl came to see me on December 4th owing to difficulty in speaking, the case being a typical one of paralysis following diphtheria. It appeared that she had a sore throat on November 20th. On the 23rd she went to school but had not been since. Other children in the house were also said to have sore throats. On visiting the place I found a child of three with diphtheria (from which he died) and a boy aged 7 who was said to have had the same symptoms but did not shew any signs at the time I saw him.

One case occurred in a soldier who had been in contact with one of the children at the house in which he was billeted.

On December 9th, owing to an outbreak of sore throat together with some cases of diphtheria, I recommended closure of St. Andrew's School until January 4th.

There is no doubt that the disease was spread by contact at school and mainly through Standard 5.

No provision exists in this district for the examination of swabs from the throats of suspected cases of diphtheria or from those convalescent from the disease. Had the children of

standard 5 been so examined after the first few cases I feel sure the outbreak could have been checked earlier and that school closure would have been unnecessary. Such an examination is a most powerful means of preventing the spread of diphtheria, greater in my opinion than an Isolation Hospital, for, as in Scarlet Fever, it is the unrecognised cases which cause epidemics and not those which are notified.

I suggested that the County Council should be approached with a view to sharing the expense of the work with the District Council. This is done in many districts and County Councils are directly interested in the attendance at Elementary Schools. The Urban Council agreed to this course but the County Council refused to bear any share of the cost.

Nine cases were removed to the Isolation Hospital, and three died.

Antitoxin is provided by the District Council for cases in the Urban District.

SCARLET FEVER AND OTHER INFECTIOUS DISEASES.

Of the nine cases, two were imported ; one a soldier from Halton Camp and the other a soldier's child who was on a visit to the town. The mother of the latter also contracted it. The remaining cases occurred at different parts of the year, and were not influenced by school attendance.

All were removed to the Isolation Hospital.

There were two notifications of Puerperal Fever and one death. The one case of Enteric Fever was in August. The patient, a girl, had not been out of the town and no source of infection was found ; she was treated in the hospital.

A number of children attending St. Andrew's School suffered from Mumps during October and November.

PHTHISIS AND OTHER TUBERCULAR DISEASES.

A marked diminution in the number of notifications has taken place. During the year, three only being received, one a patient in the County Asylum. She has been an inmate many years and no doubt contracted the disease since leaving

this district. The others were both in the early stage of the disease and slept in separate bedrooms. Visits were made and instructions given as to the means to prevent spreading of the complaint.

One patient was sent to a sanatorium by the Insurance Committee and later provided with a shelter which was erected in his garden and in which he has slept up to the present time and continued his ordinary work.

Two deaths were registered. Houses are disinfected after deaths from this complaint.

No cases of non-pulmonary tuberculosis were reported nor did any deaths take place from this cause throughout the year.

The County Council propose to erect a small Sanatorium, together with a Pavilion, for the reception of those in a more advanced stage of the disease than those for whom sanatorium treatment is appropriate. The latter is most important, for advanced cases are the most infectious, and as the disease progresses the family usually gets poorer and less able to deal with the case suitably in their own home.

The County Council has also purchased shelters which are loaned to persons for erection in their own gardens where this method of treatment is considered suitable.

Tuberculosis Dispensaries have been instituted at Bedford and Luton for the diagnosis and treatment of any cases occurring in the county. The Tuberculosis Officer is prepared to assist Medical Practitioners by the bacteriological examination of sputum from suspected cases.

ISOLATION HOSPITAL.

This consist of two blocks, each containing two wards, and providing accommodation for eighteen patients. As there is no laundry one ward has to be used for this purpose. The Local Government Board was asked to sanction a loan for the latter, but as the construction of the hospital, in other respects, did not meet with their requirements it was refused. More lavatory accommodation is required.

A person having charge of one suffering from infectious disease and desiring removal to the hospital, is required to sign

an agreement undertaking to pay to the District Council the following sum per week, or part of a week, that the patient remains in the hospital.

For cases of Scarlet Fever		£1 : 11 : 6
„ „ Diphtheria or Typhoid Fever		£2 : 2 : 0

In the cases of non-residents the charges are two and three guineas a week respectively.

The five Elementary Schools in the town appear to be in a satisfactory sanitary condition. The public Water Supply is laid on and water closets provided for each school.

HOUSING.

Speaking generally, the housing conditions in this town are superior to those in most small urban districts. I am not aware of any houses which could be considered unfit for human habitation. Owners as a rule are ready to carry out necessary repairs. More good can often be done by meeting the owner on the spot and pointing out what is required than by serving notices with threats of penalties. I am strongly in favour of this being done by the Sanitary Inspector before cases are reported to the Authority. If this is not sufficient, then by all means have official notices served and insist on the requirements being carried out.

Notices for cleansing and limewashing have hitherto all been served upon the landlords. I would suggest their service upon the tenants, where by their default the property has been allowed to get into a dirty condition. As stated in the Health Report for the County: "The Public Health Acts seem to give power to do everything except compel the occupier to do his duty."

If the owner does this work tenants are apt to get careless about their cottages and feel that they have no responsibility in in the matter.

There does not appear to be any scarcity of houses to meet the needs of the inhabitants.

The billeting of three thousand troops in the town has of course caused overcrowding and a certain amount of risk. Cases of infectious disease occurred in houses where spread seemed

almost certain, but with one or two exceptions no untoward result took place.

During the year 151 houses were inspected in accordance with the provisions of the Housing and Town Planning Act. None were found to be in such a state as to be unfit for habitation. In 60, defects were found, mainly those of drainage, sanitary conveniences or dampness; 24 were dirty, 16 by default of landlord and 8 by tenants' default. Notices were served in each case and the requirements carried out without recourse to legal proceedings.

Ten houses with insufficient water supply were connected to the town's drains.

Seven cottages at Leedon are without a proper supply. This is beyond the termination of the Hockliffe Road Main. The owner has received the necessary notice.

During the year fifteen cottages have been erected.

All new houses comply with the requirements of the Council's Bye-laws which were sanctioned by the Local Government Board in 1892.

HOUSING AND TOWN PLANNING ACT.

Number of dwelling houses inspected	...	...	...	...	...	151
"	"	"	found unfit for habitation	...	...	0
"	"	"	or surroundings in which sanitary defects			
			were found	...	...	61
"	"	"	with defects of drainage	...	...	34
"	"	"	with defective sanitary conveniences	...	...	17
"	"	"	with dampness	...	...	12
"	"	"	dirty by landlords' default	...	...	16
"	"	"	dirty by tenants' default	...	...	8
"	"	"	with insufficient paving	...	...	2
"	"	"	with internal defects, walls, ceilings, floors			7
"	"	"	with defective roofs or gutters	...	...	3

DISPOSAL OF REFUSE.

The removal of ashes is undertaken by a contractor for the District Council, bins being emptied at least once a week. Trade refuse and the contents of privies and pail closets have to be removed by occupiers. The refusal of the Authority to undertake the latter work has had an effect in hastening the conversion

of dry closets into w.c's. Refuse is disposed of in a disused sand pit.

The privies are chiefly old fashioned pit closets, the ordinary privies with covered ashpit being almost unknown in this district.

During last year eight pit and pail closets have been converted into w.cs. In some parts of the town, especially the lower ends of Vandyke and Hockliffe Roads, where there is no sewer, water closets are impracticable and the pail system is in use. Although these houses have plenty of garden ground the closets are not emptied sufficiently often and cause considerable nuisance, especially in summer.

The sewers gravitate to the lowest parts of the town, whence their contents are forced by compressed air (Shone's system) through rising mains to the works off King Street.

About eighteen months ago complaints were made of smells from the works, and also pollution of the stream by the effluent. The County Medical Officer and an Engineer reported that to remodel the Works in such a manner that sanction of the Local Government Board for a loan could be obtained would involve an outlay of about two thousand pounds.

The District Council did not feel justified in incurring so great a cost at the present time.

The Works, completed in 1895, consisted of screening chamber, sedimentation tanks and land filtration.

The smell arose partly from emptying the sediment from the tanks, which was pumped by hand. Within the last three or four years percolating filters, with fixed distributors, have been added, but the area of these was quite inadequate to deal with the whole of the tank effluent.

For the last twelve months alumino ferric has been used as a precipitant and recently a gas engine fixed to pump sludge from the tanks. It is also intended to increase the number of filters. By these means the effluent should be improved and the smell arising from the place considerably diminished. It must be remembered that no sewage disposal works, however perfect, are absolutely without smell and that they are also often blamed for smells arising from an entirely different source, such as accumulations of manure or recently manured land in the vicinity.

WATER SUPPLY.

The public supply instituted at the same time as the sewerage system has proved an inestimable benefit to the town. Until recently complaints were made from time to time of a good deal of discolouration.

The analysis shews the water to be of exceptional organic purity with about fourteen degrees (Clarke's scale) of hardness, practically all of which is temporary and therefore removable by boiling. The water is pumped from a bore-hole (200 feet in depth) in the greensand and contains one-fifth of a grain of iron per gallon. For some years it was used in this condition and a considerable deposit of oxide of iron took place in the mains. Later the iron was removed by means of Candy filters, although some of the deposit is still in the mains. This was stirred up after flushing of sewers or an excessive draught of water in the town, hence the discolouration. For the last six or eight months there has been little to complain of in this respect. Although the appearance of this iron in the water was objectionable, the discolouration was quite harmless from a health point of view.

MILK SUPPLY.

There is only one registered cowkeeper in the Urban District, the milk from about thirty cows being sent to London. The milk supply of the town is mainly from cowkeepers in the neighbouring Rural District of Eaton Bray, and is distributed by eleven registered milk sellers. There are two dairies. No cases of tuberculosis in cattle have been notified in the Eaton Bray Rural District during the year.

The ten registered slaughter houses have all been visited, and are kept in good condition. The floors generally are of blue brick set in cement. The public water supply is laid to each shed.

At the end of the year there were 133 workshops on the register, to which 56 inspections were made. They are chiefly small dressmaking or tailoring establishments.

Three sanitary defects were found and remedied after notice.

Twelve bakehouses, two of which are underground, are kept in a clean and wholesome state.

Vital Statistics of Whole District during 1914 and previous Years.

YEAR.	Population estimated to middle of each Year.	BIRTHS.			TOTAL DEATHS REGISTERED IN THE DISTRICT.		TRANSFERABLE DEATHS.†		NETT DEATHS BELONGING TO THE DISTRICT.			
		Un- corrected Number.	Nett.		Number. *	Rate.	of Non-Residents registered in the district. †	of Residents not registered in the District. †	Under 1 year of age.		At all Ages.	
			Number †	Rate.					Number *	Rate per 1000 Nett Births.	Number *	Rate.
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13
1909	6331	151		23·8	100	15·8	14		13	86	86	13·6
1910	6331	158		24·9	92	14·5	12		16	101	80	12·6
1911	6784	152	153	22·5	98	14·4	10	4	12	78	92	13·6
1912	6784	149	150	22·1	99	14·7	9	9	13	86	99	14·6
1913	3850	112	112	16·3	73	10·7	9	8	8	71	72	10·5
1914	6850	130	129	18·8	108	15·7	13	17	6	46	112	16·3

NOTES.—This Table is arranged to show the gross births and deaths in the district, and the births and deaths properly belonging to it with the corresponding rates. For years before 1911 some of the corrected rates probably will not be available. The rates should be calculated per 1000 of the estimated gross population. In a district in which large Public Institutions for the sick or infirm seriously affect the statistics, the rates in Columns 5 and 13 may be calculated on a nett population, obtained by deducting from the estimated gross population the average number of inmates not belonging to the district in such institutions.

Area of District in acres (land and inland water) }	2426	Total population at all ages	...	...	6784	} At Census of 1911.
		Total families or separate occupiers	...	...	1657	

Cases of Infectious Disease notified during the year 1914.

	At all ages.	Under 1.	1 to 5.	5 to 15.	15 to 25.	25 to 45.	45 to 65.	65 and upwards.	Total cases removed to Hospital.
Small-pox ...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	
Cholera (C) Plague (P) ...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	
Diphtheria (including Membranous croup) 14	...	...	1	12	...	1	...	...	9
Erysipelas 2	...	...	...	...	...	...	1	1	
Scarlet fever 9	...	...	1	6	...	2	...	...	9
Typhus fever ...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	
Enteric fever 1	...	...	...	...	1	...	...	...	1
Relapsing fever ...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	
Continued fever ...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	
Puerperal fever 2	...	...	...	...	1	1	...	...	
Cerebro-spinal Meningitis ...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	
Poliomyelitis 1	...	...	...	...	...	1	...	...	
Ophthalmia Neonatorum ...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	
Pulmonary Tuberculosis 3	...	...	...	...	1	2	...	...	
Other forms of Tuberculosis ...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	
Totals	32	..	2	18	3	7	1	1	19

Isolation Hospital at Leighton Buzzard provided by the Urban District Council.

Causes of, and Ages at, Death during Year 1914.

CAUSES OF DEATH.	Net Deaths at the subjoined ages of "Residents" whether occurring within or without the District.									Total Deaths whether of "Residents" or "Non-Residents" in Institutions in the District.
	All Ages	Under 1 year	1 and under 2	2 and under 5	5 and under 15	15 and under 25	25 and under 45	45 and under 65	65 and upwards	
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
All causes { Certified ...	111	6	4	1	3	4	13	28	52	17
Uncertified ...	1									
Enteric Fever ...										
Small-pox ...										
Measles ...										
Scarlet fever ...										
Whooping-cough ...	1	1								
Diphtheria and Croup ...	3			1	2					1
Influenza ...	2							1	1	
Erysipelas ...										
Phthisis (pulmonary tuberculosis) ...	2					1	1			
Tuberculous Meningitis ...										
Other tuberculous diseases ...										
Cancer (malignant disease) ...	12						1	4	7	3
Rheumatic Fever ...	1								1	
Meningitis ...										
Organic Heart Disease ...	21		1				2	8	10	4
Bronchitis ...	6	1						1	4	
Pneumonia (all forms) ...	5		1				1		3	2
Other diseases of respiratory organs ...	2						1	1		
Diarrhœa and Enteritis ...	2		2							
Appendicitis and Typhlitis ...	1						1			
Cirrhosis of Liver ...	1								1	
Alcoholism ...	1							1		
Nephritis and Bright's Disease ...	5						2	2	1	1
Puerperal fever ...	1					1				
Other accidents and diseases of Pregnancy and Parturition ...										
Congenital Debility and Malformation, including Premature Birth ...	2	2								
Violent Deaths, excluding Suicide ...	5	2			1	1	1			
Suicide ...	3						1	1	1	
Other Defined Diseases ...	29					1	2	9	17	3
Diseases ill-defined or unknown ...	7								7	3
	112	6	4	1	3	4	13	28	53	17

INFANT MORTALITY.

1914. Nett Deaths from stated causes at various Ages under One Year of Age.

CAUSE OF DEATH.		Under 1 Week.	1-2 Weeks.	2-3 Weeks.	3-4 Weeks.	Total under 4 Weeks.	4 Weeks and under 3 Mths	3-6 Months.	6-9 Months.	9-12 Months.	Total Deaths under 1 Year.
All Causes.	Certified ...	1	1		1	3	2	1			6
	Uncertified ...										
Small-pox ...											
Chicken-pox ...											
Measles ...											
Scarlet Fever ...											
Whooping Cough ...							1				1
Diphtheria and Croup ...											
Erysipelas ...											
Tuberculous Meningitis ...											
Abdominal Tuberculosis ...											
Other Tuberculous Diseases											
Meningitis, <i>not Tuberculous</i>											
Convulsions ...											
Laryngitis ...											
Bronchitis ...					1	1					1
Pneumonia (all forms) ...											
Diarrhoea ...											
Enteritis ...											
Gastritis ...											
Syphilis ...											
Rickets ...											
Suffocation, overlying ...								1			1
Injury at Birth ..											
Atelectasis ...											
Congenital Malformations											
Premature Birth ...		1				1					1
Atrophy, Debility and											
Marasmus ...			1			1	1				2
Other Causes ...											
		1	1		1	3	2	1			6

Nett Births in the year { Legitimate, 121.
Illegitimate, 8.

Nett Deaths in the year of { Legitimate Infants, 4.
Illegitimate Infants, 2.

Factories, Workshops, Laundries, Workplaces and Homework.

1.—INSPECTION.

Including Inspections made by Sanitary Inspectors or Inspectors of Nuisances.

Premises.	No. of Inspections.	No. of Written Notices.	No. of Prosecutions
Factories (including Factory Laundries)	9	...	...
Workshops (including Workshop Laundries)	56	...	...
Workplaces (other than Outworkers' premises included in Part 3 of this Report)	...	...	...
Total	65	...	...

2.—DEFECTS FOUND.

Particulars.	Found.	Number of Defects, Referred to H.M. Inspector.	Number of Prosecutions
<i>Nuisances under the Public Health Act :—*</i>			
Want of cleanliness	1	1	...
Want of ventilation	...	...	...
Overcrowding	...	...	...
Want of drainage of floors	...	...	...
Other nuisances	1	1	...
Sanitary accommodation { insufficient	...	...	...
{ unsuitable or defective	...	...	...
{ not separate for sexes	1	1	...
<i>Offences under the Factory and Workshop Act :—</i>			
Illegal occupation of underground bakehouse (s. 101)	...	...	..
Breach of special sanitary requirements for bake- houses (ss. 97 to 100)	...	...	...
Other offences	...	...	...
(Excluding offences relating to outwork which are included in Part 3 of this Report)	...	...	...
	3	3	—

* Including those specified in sections 2, 3, 7 and 8 of the Workshop Act as remediable under the Public Health Acts.

3.—HOME WORK.

OUTWORKERS' LISTS, SECTION 107.										
NATURE OF WORK.	Lists received from Employers.					Addresses of Outworkers			Prosecutions.	
	Twice in the year.		Once in the Year.			Received from other Councils.	Forwarded to other Councils.	Failing to keep or permit inspection of Lists.	Failing to send Lists.	Inspection of Outworkers' Premises.
	Lists	Con-tractors.	Work-men.	Con-tractors.	Lists.					
1	2	3	4		5	6	7	8	9	10
Wearing apparel—	2									
(1) making, &c. ...					1	1	2			
(2) cleaning and washing										
Lace, lace curtains and nets ...										
Artificial flowers										
Nets, other than wire nets										
Tents										
Sacks										
Furniture and upholstery										
Fur pulling										
Feather sorting										
Umbrellas, &c.										
Carding, &c., of buttons, &c....										
Paper bags and boxes										
Basket making										
Brush making										
Racquet and tennis balls										
Stuffed toys										
File making										
Eletro-plate										
Cables and chains										
Anchors and grapnels										
Cart gear										
Locks, latches and keys										
Pea picking										
TOTAL	2		8		1	1	2			

4.—REGISTERED WORKSHOPS.

Bakehouses	...	...	...	...	...	12
Other Workshops	...	...	...	...	...	121
Total number of Workshops on Register	...	...	...	...	...	133

5.—OTHER MATTERS.

Class.	Number.
Matters notified to H.M. Inspectors of Factories --	
Failure to affix Abstract of the Factory and Workshop Act (s.133, 1901)...	
Action taken in matters referred by H.M. Inspectors as remediable under the Public Health Acts, but not under the Factory and Workshop Act (s. 5)	Notified by H.M. Inspectors Reports (of action taken) sent to H M. Inspector
Other	...
Underground Bakehouses (s. 101) :—	
In use at the end of the year	2

I am, Gentlemen,

Your obedient servant,

BERNARD STEDMAN,

Medical Officer of Health.